

OUT OF LEBANON

AIRMEN TRANSPORT CITIZENS FROM A NATION IN CRISIS

by Louis A. Arana-Barradas

Preparing for liftoff

American citizens board an MH-53M Pave Low helicopter in Beirut, Lebanon. The helicopter is part of the 352nd Special Operations Group at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England.

When Americans in Lebanon found themselves caught in the middle of the bloody fight between Hezbollah and Israel, many wanted out of the country — fast. But they just couldn't drive out or catch an airliner out of Beirut. Even walking out was out of the question. The intense fighting cut many of them off from any lifeline to safety.

In days, the U.S. military — directed by U.S. Central Command — mounted a massive effort to get out those people who wanted to depart. Soon, Airmen from Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England, were on scene helping fly people to safety in their HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters.

Initially, all the people getting out of Lebanon wound up in Cyprus. But when space ran out, Airmen started flying some people to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, or Ramstein Air

Base, Germany. Aboard the Air Mobility Command and U.S. Air Forces in Europe transport aircraft, teams of medics and technicians provided much-needed care and reassurance.

Crews flying C-17 Globemaster III aircraft also took people straight to stateside bases. More than 1,200 of the displaced people made it to McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., Charleston AFB, S.C., and McChord AFB, Wash. At McGuire, 305th Air Mobility Wing vice commander Col. Bill Spacy summed up the U.S. military effort.

"We are glad to be able to help our fellow Americans leave Lebanon and return safely to their homes in the United States," he said. "Our dedicated mobility professionals are proud to be involved in this vital mission."

by Senior Airman Brian Ferguson

Moving through Cyprus

Tech. Sgt. Jim Gary helps place a life preserver on Carole Souaidan before boarding an MH-53M Pave Low helicopter at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. Sergeant Gary (below), an aerial gunner with the 352nd Special Operations Group at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England, checks the rear of the helicopter as it leaves the country. The 352nd SOG transported more than 260 citizens, flying the MH-53M and the MC-130P Combat Shadow. After arriving in Cyprus, American citizens were flown to Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Airman 1st Class Jarod Lambert (far right), a loadmaster, walks down an aisle of a C-17 Globemaster III ready to assist passengers.



by Senior Airman Brian Ferguson



by Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearse





by Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall



by Kenn Mann



by Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall



Out of harm's way

(clockwise from left) Loadmaster Airman 1st Class Jarod Lambert and American children wait for buses on the stairwell of a C-17 after landing at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Maj. Jennifer Taylor, a nurse, talks with a young boy in the passenger terminal. Food, lodging, medical support and a host of other services were made available to the approximately 1,800 American citizens that passed through via Air Force aircraft. An American citizen thanks an Airman as he serves her food at Ramstein. Staff Sgt. Robert Anderson marshals in a C-17 at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J. Air Force aircrews from McGuire, Charleston and McChord Air Force Bases flew American citizens back into the United States.